

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on Water & Power

Witness Statement

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H.R.1787

PRESENTED TO THE

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER & POWER

BY

GARLAND BRUNOE, VICE CHAIRMAN TRIBAL COUNCIL CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE WARM SPRINGS RESERVATION OF OREGON

APRIL 6, 2000

Mr. Chairman, Congressman Walden, members of the Subcommittee, good afternoon. I am Garland Brunoe, Vice Chairman of the Tribal Council of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon. It is my pleasure to be here today to convey the Confederated Tribes' support for HR1787, sponsored by Congressman Walden to reauthorize Bureau of Reclamation participation in the Deschutes Basin Resources Conservancy, the DRC.

The Deschutes River is a magnificent resource cherished by all Oregonians, and particularly by those of us who live there. As Central Oregon thrives, the Deschutes is under increasing pressure, causing its degradation. The River's fall Chinook, steelhead and bull trout are all listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

As you know, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs are deeply concerned about the condition of the river's salmon. In 1989, the Environmental Defense and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation began a cooperative project to reconcile on-reservation ecological and economic conflicts. In late 1992, the Tribes and Environmental Defense expanded the scope of the project to include the entire Deschutes Basin. It was agreed that the initial focus would be on river flows and water pollution. Flow-deficient stream reaches and excessive water pollutant loads could only be mitigated by identifying and reducing existing water diversions and pollution discharges. At the same time, a high value was placed on being "good neighbors" to other landowners and resources users within the Basin. Positive incentives for changes in resource uses were emphasized instead of costly and divisive political and legal conflicts. Solutions employing economic incentives, such as water rights and pollution allowance marketing, were introduced and experiences elsewhere in the West were reviewed.

A key forum for this community dialogue, the "Ad Hoc Deschutes Group", was formed. The 14 member Ad Hoc Group had representatives of all economic sectors in the Basin. The irrigation community holds the most water rights and reservoir storage and therefore has the greatest impact among resource users on the pattern and amount of river flows. At the same time, water quality degradation stems from a diverse set of land uses driving non-point water pollution. An important part of the project was to assure that the federal interests in the Basin were addressed along with those of the tribes, resource users, and local and state governments.

The Ad Hoc Group recognized the need for a private organization with ecosystem-determined goals and methods based on positive incentives, consensus, and local governance. Since approximately half of the Basin's land area is managed by federal agencies it was clear that such a private organization would need the capacity to partner on projects with the federal agencies to be truly ecosystem and basinwide in scope. In March, 1996, Senator Hatfield introduced S. 1662 authorizing federal agencies to work with this private organization, known as the Deschutes Basin Working Group. Title III of the Oregon Resource Conservation Act of 1996, signed by the President in September, 1996, authorizes the following:

- Federal agencies to work with the private Deschutes Basin Working Group, dba Deschutes Basin Resources Conservancy (DRC)
- Secretaries of Interior & Agriculture to appoint DRC board members for 3 year terms
- Federal participation with DRC in ecological restoration projects on federal and non-federal land and water with 50-50 cost share
- Five year startup authorization of \$1.0 Million a year federal fund; 50/50 cost share with DRC
- Emphasize voluntary market-based economic incentives
- The Deschutes Basin Working Group, later to adopt an operating name of the Deschutes Basin Resources Conservancy (DRC), has the goal of implementing on-the-ground projects that enhance the quality of the region's natural resources and add value to its economy.
- Its board consists of nine members from the Basin's private sector; hydropower, livestock grazing, recreation/tourism, timber, land development, irrigation (2), environmental (2), and two members from the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation. In addition to the private board members there are two board members appointed from the Departments of Interior and Agriculture, two board members representing the State of Oregon, and four members representing local governments within the Deschutes Basin.

As you can see, the DRC has the foundation to play a key role in restoring the Deschutes River and its salmon species. It has shown great success and we ask you give it the opportunity to continue this success by supporting the Bureau of Reclamations continued support of this project. Thank you.

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